

hydro, with thermonuclear energy, with energy derived from gas and oil taken from areas outside Alberta, including Arctic resources. There will be competing applications. There is bound to be a major dispute in the years ahead as to whether a gas line should be built on the east or on the west coast of Hudson Bay. This decision will be the subject of competing interests in Ontario, Manitoba and Quebec. There will be controversy regarding the precise route the Mackenzie pipeline will take and the nature of the industrial development associated with these projects.

The Athabasca oilsands are important, but until oil has actually been extracted from them, there is little the federal government can do. Until the provincial government attempts to export that oil to other provinces the federal government has no jurisdiction. Only in the case of exports from a province does the federal government exercise any authority, and permits are presently being reviewed by the Energy Board.

I wish to repeat that I believe in decentralization. I believe the west has a legitimate argument to make. But in my view decentralization should be directed toward all areas of Canada which are in need of development, not only toward Barry from Toronto, or Saint Scholastique from Montreal, or to North Bay in northern Ontario, or to Pontiac in the province of Quebec, but right up to Kenora-Rainy River. However, at this point I would suggest the hon. member's proposal is slightly premature.

Mr. Cyril Symes (Sault Ste. Marie): Mr. Speaker, I must confess I read with dismay the bill in the name of the hon. member for Calgary Centre (Mr. Andre) which proposes to move the National Energy Board to Calgary. In my opinion, moving this Board to Calgary is like moving a virgin into an army barracks. Whatever virtue the board now has would soon disappear completely once it crawled into bed with the oil tycoons in Calgary.

It would be more to the point to abolish the Energy Board as it is presently constituted and come up with a body which would work in the interests of the Canadian consumer. The history of the National Energy Board since its inception in 1959 has been one of short-sighted decision-making and policies which have not worked in favour of the Canadian industry and the Canadian consumer.

If we look back, we can recall that the Board was set up in 1959 shortly after the great pipeline debate, supposedly to preserve Canadian interests. The Borden Royal commission had recommended the setting up of such a board, pointing out that Canada had exported petroleum resources to the detriment of Canadian consumers in the past. I might refer, for example, to the Essex County gas fields in Ontario, and to what was done on the west coast under the Pacific-Northwest agreement.

The royal commission further pointed out that Canadians were exporting gas to the United States at extremely low prices, resulting in a loss of revenue, and recommended the setting up of the National Energy Board in order to preserve Canadian interests. What has been the result? I am afraid, judging by the history of this Board, that it has become the best friend of the petroleum industry.

Perhaps this is because of its membership. Many of its members are former oil executives or people who have been closely involved in the industry and who possess a

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particular bias. In addition, the Board is subjected to tremendous pressure from the oil industry which submits briefs and arguments by high-priced lawyers and experts which overload the Board with facts and figures in favour of the case put forward by the industry. This is why the very idea of moving the Board to Calgary dismays me. The hon. member told us there were some 400 oil executives in that city. I can just imagine the pressure under which the Board would be operating.

Canada has exported most of her cheap natural gas to the United States or, at least, has committed herself to doing so. In 1972, in consequence of decisions by the National Energy Board, 40 per cent of Canada's marketable natural gas was exported to the United States at prices much below those which could have been obtained having regard to the energy crisis in that country. My fear is that if we do not place limits on exports, Canadians will have to pay more for the use of their own natural gas resources as future domestic needs increase.

The whole premise of the Board's philosophy in relation to the export of energy is wrong. The Board says that if Canadians can find enough oil or gas for the domestic market we should export the surplus. The folly of this reasoning is that as reserves become depleted the cost of production rises. In other words, because the United States is getting so much cheap natural gas today, Canadians in the future will have to pay much more for this source of energy as we are forced to bring supplies from the far north where extraction and capital costs are so much more expensive.

Why has the Board refused to accept the idea of a two-price system whereby Canadians would pay one price for oil and gas and importers in other countries would pay the much higher world market price? We can benefit as Canadians under such a policy, but try to convince the National Energy Board or the oil companies which have such undue influence on the National Energy Board. In spite of the fact that two of the four major natural gas exporters are U.S. subsidiaries selling gas to parent companies, the National Energy Board has not intervened to impose more fair prices for our resources.

● (1740)

Mr. Andre: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I have enjoyed with other hon. members the hon. member's description of NDP energy policy, but I submit this has very little to do with the subject we are discussing. The merits or demerits of the National Energy Board and the facility with which it has handled Canada's energy in the past is not the subject matter of this bill. I would rather the hon. member stuck to the subject matter and not engage in a derogatory criticism of the National Energy Board. Certainly that was not the intent of my bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Boulanger): It seems to me that the point of order raised by the hon. member is one that could be well taken in respect of the speeches of other hon. members. The hon. member did seem, to the Chair, to be wandering from the bill when he referred to the western conference. I suppose I should have called the hon. members to order, but I will now ask the hon. member to relate his remarks more specifically to the bill.